

# PRISON OUTREACH MINISTRY, INC.

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## Welcome Home

Serving the Imprisoned and  
Helping Them Transition Home

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~ **Melissa George, Reentry Coordinator**

# The Welcome Home Reentry Program

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- ❑ 501(c)3 nonprofit
  - ❑ Have been providing services to the incarcerated since 1984. Initially provided toiletries and other necessities to inmates in the DC jail.
  - ❑ After witnessing the high rate of recidivism, POM broadened its focus and launched its *mentoring program* in February 2006, in DC. The program grew to include MC in December of 2006; and PG in early 2008.
  - ❑ We continue to serve in three jurisdictions.
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# Mission:

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To live the Gospel Mandate to serve men and women returning to their communities after incarceration. We seek to **reduce** recidivism, **educate** the community and develop strong systems of **support**, by building relationships and by matching returning individuals with compassionate volunteer mentors from communities of faith and civic organizations.

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# Collaboration:

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- ❑ Archdiocese of Washington
  - ❑ Catholic Charities D.C.
  - ❑ Montgomery County Department of Correction and Rehabilitation, Pre-Release and Reentry Services
  - ❑ Prince George's County Health Dept.
  - ❑ Unity Healthcare in D.C.
  - ❑ Mount Vernon Place United Methodist Church
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# Funding:

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- ☐ Foundation Grants
  - ☐ Gifts
  - ☐ Support from local churches
  - ☐ Contributions from interested individuals and organizations
  - ☐ Government Grants
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# Montgomery County Pre-Release Center:

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# Mentor Recruitment:

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- ☐ Catholic Churches
  - ☐ Other Faith Communities and Churches (ex: Baptist, Episcopal, Presbyterian, Jewish)
  - ☐ Word of mouth
  - ☐ Volunteer websites
  - ☐ Libraries
  - ☐ Civic organizations (i.e. Kiwanis Clubs)
  - ☐ Volunteer Fairs
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# Mentor Criteria:

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- ☐ Willing to make a year commitment;
  - ☐ Possess knowledge, skills, abilities, and sound life experiences;
  - ☐ Feel passionately about the mission and purpose;
  - ☐ Agree to complete a Background check;
    - no charges/probation ("off paper") for the three years prior
  - ☐ Current TB test;
  - ☐ 25 years of age or older;
  - ☐ Understand that we are faith-based but that we do not preach or proselytize
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# Mentee Recruitment:

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- ❑ Depends upon the jurisdiction:
    - In MC, through the Pre-Release Center
    - In PG and D.C., through the jail and other collaborative partners
  - ❑ We serve:
    - Adults
    - men and women
    - Individuals either soon to be released from incarceration OR who are within their first year of release
  - ❑ Strictly voluntary enrollment in program (not mandated by probation/parole or other contract)
  - ❑ Individuals are not precluded based upon their charges
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# Making Matches:

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- ☐ Mentor attends an orientation session (jurisdictionally specific)
  - ☐ Mentor/mentee complete applications
  - ☐ Mentor/mentee meet (separately) with the jurisdictional reentry coordinator for an interview
  - ☐ Matches are made based on the following:
    - ☐ Time availability
    - ☐ Personality
    - ☐ Interests
    - ☐ Individual preferences or coordinator's judgment (age, gender, race, health)
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# Traits of a **Great Mentor**:

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- ☐ **Accepting, Authentic, Patient, Respectful, Trustworthy**
  - ☐ Dependable, punctual, responsible and reliable
  - ☐ A good listener
  - ☐ Open, flexible, and friendly
  - ☐ Supportive, positive, and non-judgmental
  - ☐ Able to recognize their mentee's limitations
  - ☐ Sociable, confidant, motivated
  - ☐ Ability to set and keep personal boundaries
  - ☐ Ability to understand and adapt to different cultural, racial, sexual, spiritual, and intellectual needs
  - ☐ Ability to recognize own limitations, yet also to problem solve with the assistance of others
  - ☐ Ability to empower mentee but not enable
  - ☐ Consistency
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# What Mentors Do:

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- ☐ Offer guidance, moral support, assistance and practical information about employment, housing, and social services
- ☐ Help mentees reintegrate successfully into their communities
- ☐ Develop supportive relationships with mentees
- ☐ Provide mentees with a sense of belonging while fostering positive ties to the community
- ☐ Model pro-social behavior (i.e. take mentees to the library, to a museum, to a baseball game, to the theater)

# Supporting Matches & Retaining Mentors:

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- ❑ Expect mentors to complete 15 hours of training within their first 18 months of service (topics include improving listening skills and communication skills)
- ❑ Offer ongoing support sessions to both mentor and mentee groups on a regular basis
- ❑ Coordinator must be readily available to offer support, provide information and develop relationships with other agencies and service providers
- ❑ Ensure that mentor record keeping can be completed easily, yet accurately, as this is extremely important for ongoing program development and funding (Survey Monkey)

# What works ??:

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- ❑ Recognizing each matched pair as unique, while maintaining integrity and structure of the program (what works for one pair might not work for another)
- ❑ Partnering/collaborating with other agencies ~ mentors don't feel full weight of the responsibility for mentee's success or failure
- ❑ Remaining realistic ~ orient/train mentors about barriers their mentees will face (relapse related to substance abuse, difficulty finding employment and/or housing, lack of skills to manage time, plan for themselves, identify goals)
- ❑ Coordinator should be readily available to troubleshoot when/if issues arise (identifying resources, offering alternative solutions)
- ❑ Voluntary enrollment helps to assure mentee motivation and commitment

# Lessons Learned ??:

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- ❑ Not everyone is 'cut out' for this type of volunteer position ~ Mentors support and encourage but do not 'save' mentees
  - ❑ Mentor flexibility and ability to think outside of the box are crucial
  - ❑ Frequent contact with mentors and mentees helps to negate 'hidden' issues affecting relationship building (scheduling, lack of clear communication)
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# Success Stories: Anecdotal Results

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- ☐ Mentee receiving appropriate dental work
- ☐ Mentee finding housing, regardless of felony
- ☐ Mentee filing taxes and using refund for security deposit on an apartment
- ☐ Mentee developing a business plan with mentor
- ☐ Mentee opening a bank account
- ☐ Mentee receiving tutoring from mentor and subsequently passing their GED exam
- ☐ Mentee having a mentor with whom to share their story



# Mentor/Mentee Pair:

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- ❑ **Floyd** (mentor) and **Rudy** (mentee)
  - ❑ Matched since 10/4/10
  - ❑ Floyd works collaboratively with other members of Rudy's "team"
  - ❑ They meet minimum weekly (both in and out of the PRC facility)
  - ❑ They work together on a variety of tasks, identifying numerous resources in the community to help ensure Rudy's success
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# Melissa George, Reentry Coordinator

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~ PowerPoint presentation can be emailed upon request

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